

# ***The Library Assistant***

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL  
OF THE ASSOCIATION OF  
ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS  
(SECTION OF THE LIBRARY  
ASSOCIATION) :: ::

HON. EDITOR: A. C. JONES  
WARRINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

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**January, 1951**

## INAUGURAL MEETING 1951

Mr. KINGSLEY MARTIN

Editor of

*The New Statesman and Nation*

will speak

at

CHAUCER HOUSE

on

11th JANUARY, at 7 p.m.

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Past and present members of the Association  
are invited to attend.

## THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

### **A New Year's Message from The President**

Now that the hubbub of self-congratulation has died down we can all tuck our century-old beards out of the way and get on with the job of providing a library service worthy of 1951. There is certainly a lot to be done, but the more backward library authorities can be encouraged and the more progressive library authorities heartened by the enthusiasm of the staffs that serve them.

The aim of our Association must be to inspire that enthusiasm. We can achieve this by meeting our colleagues at national and divisional meetings and discussing the problems that confront us, by studying to become professionally competent, and by reading and thinking and talking about the things that matter.

During the year I hope to meet many of you at your Divisional Meetings and bring you the good wishes of the Council of the Association. In the meantime I wish you all a busy and a successful year.

E. A. CLOUGH.

### ***Election of National Councillors and Honorary Secretary***

The result of the poll was:—

#### *Honorary Secretary:*

Tynemouth, W.	..	..	1407	Elected.
Shaw, L. J.	..	..	1046	Not elected.

#### *National Councillors:*

Phillips, W. H.	..	..	1803	
Sharr, F. A.	..	..	1656	
Willson, Miss E. J.	..	..	1411	
Tighe, F. C.	..	..	1387	
Carver, A. Ll.	..	..	1359	
Wrapp, Miss E. F.	..	..	1326	

Tomlinson, O. S.	..	..	1157	
Germany, A.	..	..	1046	
Heaton, P. J.	..	..	897	
Enser, A. G. S.	..	..	769	

#### *Analysis:*

6397 voting papers were distributed.

2647 (41.2 per cent.) were returned.

52 were invalid.

2595 voting papers were counted.

As from 1st January, Mr. W. Tynemouth will take over the Honorary Secretaryship of the Association and all communications should be addressed to him at: Central Library, New Bridge Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

## THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

### A.A.L. Correspondence Courses

Students are reminded that completed application forms, and the appropriate fees, for the courses beginning in March and April, must reach Mr. S. W. Martin, A.L.A., Carnegie Library, Herne Hill Road, London S.E.24, on or before February 28th, after which date no application will be considered.

Full particulars of the ordinary courses available are given in the *L.A. Year Book* and *Student's Handbook*.

A limited number of *Registration Revision Courses*, comprising five double lessons of the ordinary courses, are now available, and are reserved exclusively for those students who have already sat the examinations for which courses are required. These courses are arranged twice yearly, from March to June and from September to December.

### Council Notes

COUNCIL met for the fifth and last time during 1950 on 2nd November, at Chaucer House, with the President (F. C. Tighe, Esq.) in the chair.

It was announced that Mr. Kingsley Martin, the Editor of the *New Statesman and Nation*, would speak at the 1951 Inaugural Meeting on 11th January. The Annual General Meeting for 1951 will be held as part of the Manchester Conference. The programme for this week-end conference was considered by the Council and it was agreed to consider the recruitment, training and welfare of library assistants, at the working sessions of the Conference.

*Index to Progress*—the Association's film—has been remarkably successful and the Council were informed that the Central Film Library of the C.O.I. were making a large number of copies for distribution throughout the world. It was decided to set up a small committee to consider the future policy of the Association with regard to the production of films.

The Press and Publications Committee considered a good deal of routine business but of particular interest was the fact that it is hoped to publish Mr. Hepworth's *Primer of Assistance to Readers*, and a new edition of Mr. Phillips' *Primer of Classification* early in 1951.

Correspondence courses are the concern of the Education and Library Committee, who were able to report that 547 students had enrolled for the October courses. For the rest the committee concerned themselves with the organisation of this very large number of courses and they were informed that standard courses were now available for Final Part 1 and Final Part 2 (a).

In November the Finance and General Purposes Committee consider the financial position of the Association as a result of the year's work. It would seem likely that a working balance of £150 will be carried forward to 1951, a year in which it is anticipated that there will be a turnover of £4,000. Our income is clearly inadequate for the work we do. The carefully compiled estimates made it clear that every economy must be exercised in 1951 if we are to maintain our present precarious financial position. This position can be improved by a considerable increase in membership, and

## THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

the committee were heartened to learn that there are now 6,317 members. *It was emphasised that all who wish either to remain in membership or to take up membership for the first time must indicate this when they complete the form for payment of their subscription to the Library Association.*

Mr. Corbett, the Vice-President in 1951, spoke in appreciation of the President's services during the year and Mr. Tighe, in his reply, thanked the Council, the honorary officers and the membership at large for their many kindnesses to him during his year of office. Finally, Mr. Parsonage, the Chairman of the Press and Publications Committee, acknowledged the indebtedness of the Association to Mr. J. F. W. Bryon, the retiring Honorary Editor of *The Library Assistant*—an office he has held with distinction for three years.

E.A.C.

### **Conservation—A basic function for reference libraries?**

D. F. EASTO

DURING a recent period of enforced idleness on sick leave, I had the opportunity to peruse at leisure articles and correspondence in the professional journals for recent years. I found my attention caught by the recurrent and, at times, heated controversy on the suppression or continued expansion of reference libraries and their relation to lending departments (*L. A. Record*, Nov. 1948, Feb., April, 1949, *Librarian*, Dec., 1948, Jan., 1949). If it is not impertinent for a mere apprentice to interpose between the "big guns" at this late hour, may he put forward a few considerations which seem to have some relevance?

Since there has been considerable reflection upon the progress of the public library movement during its first hundred years of existence, it is pertinent to note some of the technical improvement made in the production of books and other printed literature which at first preceded the growth of the public library and were later contemporary with it, and which influenced the kind, quality and quantity available for the library shelves.

It is now fairly common knowledge that the novel as a literary form multiplied considerably during the second half of the nineteenth century. Biography, too, in the shape of ponderous volumes satirised—with reference to Southey—in Byron's poem the "Vision of Judgement," sprouted as a literary form suitable for gracing the bookshelves of the upper middle classes—as ornament, if not for instruction.

Such an increase in these and other kinds of printed matter, however, was not likely to have been so evident if there had been no monetary incentive for author and publisher: just as playwrights found no public for their wares under the strictures of the Commonwealth, and consequently wrote little in that form, so the Victorian writer could not be expected to create solely for the sake of literary expression. This may seem a platitude, but it should be remembered that since the custom of patronage had gone out of fashion, the profession of a writer had been hazardous and not to be lightly undertaken. Remuneration for good work was now reasonably assured as a result of the great strides made in the production of paper, the

## THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

use of type-setting machines and the invention of the Daguerreotype photographic process, all contributing to better quality and increased quantity at reasonable production costs.

The end of the eighteenth century had seen a famine of paper throughout Europe: linen and cotton rags, then the only known materials for its production, were in short supply, as may be gathered from the fact that no duties were put on their importation into England, while it was forbidden to use shrouds for the burial of the dead! The shortage was considerably increased by the demands of the Napoleonic wars when rags were in great demand for bandages. Such a famine soon stimulated experiments with other materials, and as early as 1800 a patent had been taken out for the use of straw. Little success was had, however, with this or any other material until 1851, when a satisfactory sample of paper made from esparto was shown at the Great Exhibition. Wood pulp—now the basis of newsprint—came into general use about 1870. Meanwhile the traditional manual methods of paper-making had been rendered obsolete—except for the grades of finest quality—by the perfection of a machine. Invented in France by Louis Robert, it was introduced into England by the brothers Fourdrinier in the first decade of the nineteenth century. At first, the continuous roll had to be cut into sheets for drying in lofts, as is still practised with hand-made paper, but in 1821 the idea of numerous heated drying cylinders was mooted and the machine more or less assumed its present form. Thus, when a greater variety of materials were made available for paper production, there was at hand a machine which could convert the pulp into a product of fairly good all-round quality at a speed far exceeding anything possible before in this field, and at a gradually decreasing cost: a grade of paper which in 1875 cost about three guineas a hundredweight could be obtained in 1890 for thirty shillings.

The first use of photographic plates by the Daguerreotype process was in 1840; a type-setting machine by Young and Delcambre came out in the same year; and in 1886 Mergenthaler perfected his Linotype machine.

The stimulus to authorship and publishing was evident many years before the perfection of these processes, not only in the greatly increased numbers of the literary forms mentioned above, but also in the first issues of periodicals and annuals. This is not to say that they had been totally lacking before: the *Annual Register* dated from 1758, and the *Times* from 1785; but to them was added about the middle of the nineteenth century a veritable flood of periodical literature which recorded from various stand-points, and often with illustrations, the contemporary scene: the *Spectator*, 1828; *Punch*, 1842; *Illustrated London News*, 1842; *Economist*, 1843; *Who's Who*, 1844; *Daily Telegraph and Courier*, 1855 (the first penny paper); *Cornhill*, 1860; *Whitaker's Almanac*, 1869; and many others.

Their importance, in retrospect, can scarcely be over-estimated, for they were, and still are, source records of the life and events of our recent history of a kind available in numbers and faithfulness of record, both verbally and pictorially, such as had never been possible before. They are, in fact, source "books" in the same sense as Josephus' *History of the Jewish War*, Herodian's *History of Rome* (180-230), Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War* or the Earl of Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*.

## THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

This preamble is necessary to indicate the importance of these records in the history of the written word, and the inference to be drawn would seem that it should be the function of some responsible authority to conserve—in the widest practical sense of the word—all such records as far as possible in their entirety, and at the same time make them available for *bona fide* enquiry; what better body than *some* of the larger existing public reference libraries?

It is a formidable argument, to those who would advocate the merging of reference and lending department stocks, that 90 per cent. of the stock of the former would circulate as freely as any in their respective subjects if made available for home reading; they could be exploited as easily as any of their brethren until too defaced to be further submitted to public browsing. Preservation of lending stock, fiction and non-fiction, has largely been—until the inception of such schemes as the Metropolitan Special Collections—often at the whim and discretion of individual authorities, and consequently sometimes haphazard and fortuitous. In dealing with serials and annuals of long standing, however, the need for exploitation, except in making their presence known, would seem to be at a minimum with conservation claiming prior importance. It may be questioned that this is placing too much emphasis on a limited class of materials, but on examination it forms a reasonably accurate picture of recent and unfolding history, and is a source of which all digests and text-books in this large field must take some cognizance in the future. An example from a time when records were scanty may make this more easily understood. At the recent celebration of the tercentenary of the death of Charles I (tyrant or martyr?), fresh webs of the long-standing controversy were spun in press and book and on the radio. Though this constituted an extremely interesting entertainment, much of the tangle might have been elucidated long ago if there had been in existence during that king's reign a reasonably impartial newspaper with some form of photographic reproduction, of which a file had been preserved. The technical knowledge of the time probably precluded such a happening, but it seems fairly easy to imagine how much greater our knowledge of the time might have been in such an event.

The caption of a recent advertisement of a well-known beverage began with the words: "He who plants an avenue of trees, cannot, in the nature of things, expect to enjoy them in their grandeur." There seems to be an analogy in the potential function of a librarian, for what he chooses to garner now from the increasing flow of serials may be of great value to serious lines of enquiry several decades hence. How much can be permanently retained may to some extent be dictated by storage space, and in this connection the future development of the microfilm seems to be of importance.

The functions of the microfilm and its auxiliary, the microcard, were described in the issue of the *Library Assistant* for November-December, 1948, and although the advantages of the former are patently obvious there are certain drawbacks which should not be overlooked: (1) the necessary constant supervision when in use, and the frequency with which it may be necessary to change reels for the enquirer making scattered references; (2) the possibility of various mechanical breakdowns; (3) one researcher can literally "dominate" an only microfilm viewer for a legitimate enquiry;

## THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

(4) the present small number of records which have been microfilmed. In this connection it may be supposed that as more serials are put on record the "domination" of a single viewer will become a more difficult problem. What, in the future, will constitute a minimum ratio of viewers to sets of serials in stock; finally, what bodies determine which serials are worth microfilming for posterity and will, at the same time offer, no financial embarrassment to their manufacturers?

### ***A Taste of Your Quality . . .***

JOHN HORNER

IT SEEMS as though Public Librarianship is going to start its second century to the apoplectic groan of "When I was a boy . . ." Doubtless many a speech has made much of the miraculous increase of the rate of spending on books from less than a penny per head to 8.2 pence. Back-patting and laurel bestowing have reached a high pitch. One wonders, not cynically, but simply because, like Rosa Dartle, one would like to know, how many speeches have revealed the failure of Public Libraries in Britain. How many great—or small—men pointed out that many of our libraries are far from fulfilling the need which causes the inception of any public service? Many will admit that public libraries should provide all books which the private person needs and cannot obtain privately, but how many have had the effrontery to assert that all the libraries are doing this effectively at the least cost?

Librarians have raised their permanent bleat for bigger book funds to a veritable wail—and some even had their wishes partially granted. Then they return to earmarking automatically a percentage of their funds to sub-literature. How can any librarian complain of insufficient money for books when he deliberately wastes a fraction, however small, of his allowance? And whenever a Public Library houses books which are available from other sources, within the reach of the public, there is inevitably a waste. It is a commonplace now to say that when public libraries were first started many people could not afford to join subscription libraries, but that now the twopenny library is within the reach of nearly all. As I say, it is a commonplace and usually accepted. But do librarians *act* on it, take the obvious course of not buying books stocked by the twopenny libraries? Oh, no! We have a tradition to keep up: public libraries are maintained from common funds; hence they aim to supply any book for anybody, irrespective of whether it is available elsewhere. What often happens in fact is that they supply the cheaper, more popular material. This is nearly always sub-literature and rarely needs professional skill or training in its dispensing. We might just as well go to a doctor for a bottle of aspirins when they are available over a Woolworth's counter.

Most librarians realise, in varying degrees, that they are betraying the needful public. They would like to raise the standard of their stocks, but—we may as well face it—they are afraid to. If one stealthily attempts it the great god Statistics gives a hungry growl, echoed by the committee, with the finance department glowering in the background. If a librarian goes to his committee and states that he, at least is going to be of better use

## THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

whether they like it or not—well, he just doesn't ; the country is not all that short of librarians. So we are getting deeper and deeper into the mired groove, simply because so few librarians have enough personal integrity to do what their qualified position entitles them, expects them, to.

An alternative is co-ordinated action. Many a librarian would *earn* his A.P.T. salary if he knew that his colleague in the next town, and his in the next, did. So—alarming suggestion—why should they not get together and decide to buy only those books which they consider worthwhile? This would mean reading most books ordered. And for those who do not like reading or who cannot judge the value of a book—the not-so-good twopenny libraries will need more staff ; they will be much busier, if only for the next one or two generations, and by then the unfortunate outcasts will have gone the way of all flesh. Of course, if they want a superannuated job they can press for state- or local government-owned twopenny libraries, a sort of emancipated and independent pay collection. Further, they will not be socially unuseful.

There seems to be an idea that there is something immoral about frequenting a twopenny library, in spite of the fact that the human mind cannot work hard without some relaxation. If we are caught with a Crime Club novel we need not attempt to cover our embarrassment with the excuse that Mr. Attlee too reads detective stories. Far better if, for relaxation, we could read Evelyn Waugh. However, if all public librarians will act professionally as well as call themselves professional, the time is not far distant when this will be common rather than exceptional.

The difficulty lies in getting every public librarian, however humble or inefficient, to agree to give his conscience a chance and himself a fully worthwhile job. Apparently, it is of little use indicating what the well-run and well-off libraries are doing now. If necessary, all the public librarians in the country should gather in the Albert Hall and swear, by the 14th edition of Dewey's Decimal Classification, that they will buy, or allow to be bought, only books which they consider works of literary art or works of real and direct use.

Naturally, this still allows latitude, which is where the librarianship comes in. One librarian may patronise William Sansom and not James Hanley ; another may eschew Sansom and Hanley, but both will surely include D. H. Lawrence and Maugham? Similarly, few librarians will order a tenth of the pot-boilers which have the recent war as their subject. Obviously mistakes will be made, but only over occasional books or authors, not in general policy as so often happens now.

It will be up to each public library, first, to state that its stock will not fall below the above specification, second, to improve its personal service, and third, cordially to invite its public to complain with a loud voice if it falls below expectations in either of the first two.

Let the chiefs wax savage and mix with the public, and let assistants become even savager and have the right to criticise their chiefs intelligently. Plenty of staff councils with mutual and open criticism will make things too hot for both the negligent senior and the inefficient junior.

Let there be frank advertisement of the libraries with no doubt as to whom is addressed. None of this vague "You want it ; we've got it" stuff.

## THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

Even a negation like "We are sorry but we cannot supply books with no literary or factual value" is better than no announced policy. But surely it will be possible to have local and national press announcements that from, say, 31st March, 1951, British public libraries will supply only books of real value, with given examples of authors and titles, and an open invitation to everybody to use the libraries for serious purposes.

Oh yes, issues will drop. Perhaps they will not reach their present levels again for fifty years, but every issue figure will represent quality. Imagine, or rather behold, a state of affairs in which the librarian of a town of 40,000 takes 20 minutes to persuade his committee to buy the D.N.B.; or in which a misdirected assistant boasts that the library in which he works has run a neighbouring "twopenny" library out of business. These instances, and many more, are possible because librarians will not realise their own potential value and use.

Judging by the low percentage of suicides, most people prefer life. It is possible for all professional librarians to help make this a full life. So why don't they?

### *Analysis, or In the Looking Glass*

W. TYNEMOUTH

IN THOSE libraries where they have codes in the head, and where intellectual snobbery has been allowed to run riot, you *may* find, under "Dodgson," an *Alice*, in mint condition. (Where the public understands the arrangement there is probably a gap at "Carroll" which proves the adage "better a pseud. than a psnob"). Having obtained *Alice*, find the chapter about the Mock Turtle. In a Tenniel-illustrated copy there is no need to seek an index: the Mock Turtle has a familiar look; he is the turtleification of local authority. Read what he says about the pre-1944 curriculum: ". . . the different branches of Arithmetic—Ambition, Distraction, Uglification, and Derision." He might well have been speaking about Library Annual Reports. Indeed it is a pity that the Mock Turtle came to the Lobster Quadrille before he told Alice of the Library in Wonderland.

How closely library statistics are based on those "four branches of Arithmetic." Ignore for the moment the "reeling and writhing" which precede the statistical pages of almost every report, although it is here that *Ambition* so often takes precedence over achievement. How impressive are those tables: column after column of non-fiction by class—meaningless subdivision into ten heterogeneous groups. But how great their *Distraction* value when issues are down!

*Uglification* is obvious, although some may see beauty in the Bradshaw-like pages which divide "Borrowers" (horrid word) by branches, sex and profession. And how often the printer has not numerals to match the type chosen by the Registration B(iii)\* expert.

And *Derision*? This is the branch of the Mock Turtle's arithmetic in which most statistics will be classified by efficiency experts appointed under some Act to come. Whitehall has a good idea already in practical use. What would the Chairman (not to mention the Borough Treasurer) say if

## THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

the library's annual effusion had to include a statement beginning "The estimated cost of this Report . . . ."

There is, of course, a need to state the number of issues if a record of the mechanical work done is required; and an interested member of committee should be able to discover the *number* of books purchased, even the number of fiction; and the *number* of readers should be available. But there should be no subdivision signifying nothing.

If ten per cent. of the non-fiction issue is "fine arts," does the town need an art gallery or a sports stadium? Can Deweyville be compared with another U.D.C. when one has books on flowers at 716, the other at 635; one theatrical biography as history, the other at 792; one town planning at 711, the other at 352—all, you will observe, affecting the connotation of "fine arts."

To produce issue figures divided beyond Non-fiction, Fiction and Junior should lead to a surcharge—and what a surcharge it would be! The librarian who publishes the percentage of poetical plumbers or botanical butchers should be handed over to a Gilbertian Mikado.

The solution lies in "costing." Not costing done by the endless filling, filing and analysing of time and work sheets—

To recording issue statistics	..	..	½ hour	2s. 0d.
adding monthly statistics	..	..	2 hours	8s. 0d.
10-minute tea break	..	..	½ hour	2s. 0d.
checking monthly statistics	..	..	1 hour	4s. 0d.

—and their subsequent sublimation to seven places of decimals; but intelligently planned with one aim in view, that of ensuring economic administration.

It should be more important to know the cost of processing, the comparative costs of cataloguing first copies and duplicates, and the staff required for the exit counter at peak hours, than it is to know how many 200's were issued on the night of June 3rd. The effect on the staff would be excellent. It should lead to a pride in proficiency, and give each assistant on routine duties a target at which to aim.

Perhaps the idea will spread: some modern poet may read this and, being converted, produce the result I commend:—

"Shadrach somnabulent  
Chilled at the recollection.  
Daniel  
Presidentially dreamed of mangy monarchs  
(Denizens to be  
or not to be of dens)  
Baying to the moon—and sixpence  
This will cost in Times New Roman."

### PUBLIC LIBRARIES PLEASE NOTE

It is requested that, where necessary, mailing lists for review copies of publicity material be amended to show the address of the new Honorary Editor.

## THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

### Active Divisions

#### CONFERENCES.

During the past couple of months, several week-end conferences or revision schools have been held with the now expected success. The Greater London Division's revision school was well attended and one who went to help stayed to listen from sheer enjoyment. The North Eastern Division covered such subjects as "The organisation of school visits to libraries" and "Professional literature," while the Eastern Division persuaded Mr. Heffer, of Cambridge, to discourse on whether booksellers really are necessary as well as interrupting Mr. W. H. Phillips having an informal discussion on library topics with Mr. A. A. C. Hedges. The East Midland Division had A.A.L. publications on sale at their conference, which sold well, as they did at the G.L.D. school.

#### THE OTHER FELLOW'S JOB.

Bristol went visiting a woollen mill and found it of absorbing interest. The value of such visits is the subject of an article by Mr. Whateley in the autumn number of the Midland News Sheet which might serve as a contribution to the debate held by the Manchester Division at Bury "that attendance at professional meetings is unnecessary." The motion was won by 12 votes. The North Western Newsletter carries more articles on the subject, and also a note on the Centenary Dinner and Dance held by Manchester, which was a very happy occasion.

#### A RESOLUTION FROM THE NORTH EASTERN DIVISION.

"That the Chairman of the L.A. Council and the President of the A.A.L. be invited to visit the area to address the annual meetings on the aims and objects of their respective organisations."

### Outcrop—VI

R. L. COLLISON

FROM the *Illustrated London News* of June 10th, 1854, Mr. Reginald J. Hoy (Deputy Librarian, School of Oriental and African Studies) has culled the following: "One of the best signs of social advancement is the increasing anxiety manifested by capitalists for the moral and intellectual improvement of the large numbers of the community in their employment. An interesting illustration of this duty of property has recently occurred at the Poynton and Worth Collieries, on the estate of Lord Vernon, where Mr. John Hadwen, the superintendent, has established a Newsroom and Library for the use of the colliers, and others employed in connection with the works. . . . The class of persons engaged in coal mines have generally been notorious for their rough and uncouth manners, and want of education; and it must be confessed that, hitherto, the colliers of Poynton have formed no exception to this rule; but the above provision will, doubtless aid their improvement. . . . The institution is supported as follows:—every person employed in a working capacity on the estate, to the number of between 1,100 and 1,200, subscribes one penny per month towards a common fund;

## THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

but as the amount so realised is insufficient for the support of the establishment, the deficiency is made good by Mr. Hadwen himself. We trust that the efforts made for the elevation of the Poynton colliers will be gratefully appreciated by them, and that the results will be alike satisfactory and encouraging to the generous originator. The establishment, which has been open about four months, has been well attended; and the advantages it offers appear, so far, to be fully appreciated."

The new University of Glasgow Reading Room is well illustrated and briefly described in the R.I.B.A. Journal for August, 1950 (pages 390-91), and Percy Horton gives several excellent illustrations of the murals in Chelsea Children's Library in the June, 1950, number of the *Studio* (pages 182-83). The furniture and fittings of libraries are treated in some detail in John and Rodney Hooper's *Modern Furniture and Fittings* (pages 241-54—Batsford, 1948); there are some good photographs of attractive wooden furniture in the British Museum, the National Maritime Museum, the Northern Ireland Government Library, and Golders Green branch library.

Mr. Philip M. de Paris (Central Reference Library, Westminster) points out that Frank H. Smith's "The photographic composition of type" (*Functional photography*, August and September, 1950) gives a clear pictorial and written explanation of this most important development. Another mechanical process, "The application of the punched card system to library technique" is covered by Mr. T. E. Callander in the July-August, 1946, number of the *Powers Magazine* (the house journal of the Powers-Samas Accounting Machines Ltd.), with examples from methods in use at Coulsdon and Purley.

Material on government libraries is still rare, and it is therefore very helpful to find an article on the Patent Office Library by R. Neumann in *Electronic Engineering* (February, 1949, pages 52-57). In addition to a good photograph of the library and a plan of its arrangement, there is a description of its history, lay-out, catalogues of books and periodicals, and a guide to the literature on patents. The Department of Scientific and Industrial Research have produced a useful classified analytical index to the subjects covered by its organisations under the title *Brief Guide to the research activities of D.S.I.R. and the research associations* (D.S.I.R., February, 1950). Mr. Graham Jones (Senior Assistant, Hull University College) also points out that the *Russian Translation Services Bulletin* (Dept. of Russian, Delhi University) is wide enough in scope to include librarianship, giving translations of new book titles, contents lists of professional periodicals, and some official speeches.

Students will greet with enthusiasm the new edition of Sir Gilbert Campion's *An introduction to the procedure of the House of Commons* (Macmillan, 1950) which gives in Chapter II the clearest and best explanation of the difficult subject of parliamentary papers. The Reference Librarian of Manchester, Mr. Sidney Horrocks, has published an abridgement of his thesis on the more general aspects of government publications, under the title *A brief guide to Government publications* (Manchester Public Libraries, 1950).

*Industrial and Engineering Chemistry* devotes much of its May, 1950, number to a symposium on "New techniques in chemical literature," writes Mr. R. Derrick Carter (Librarian, British Launderers' Research Associa-

## THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

tion). Some of the material is of general interest, and includes a description of a microfilm selector scanning seventy thousand entries per minute, the procedure for the documentation of technical information using microfilms and microcards for master files and material in occasional use, and the problems of the acquisition, cataloguing and storage of microcards and microfilm. On the little-known subject of microprint (of which some examples were exhibited at the Library Association Conference this year) Marvin Lowenthal wrote an illustrated article "Too small to see but not to read" in the *Saturday review of literature* (September 7th, 1940, pages 11-13).

A letter from Mr. Paul Ninnis (Reference Librarian, Exeter) quotes from John Penwith's "Leaves from a Cornish notebook" (Penzance, the Cornish Library, 1950: pages 33-35) which describes a subscription library founded in 1818 and still in existence. This is the Morrab Library at Penzance, a stone's throw from the public library. It is packed from top to bottom with books of every kind—about thirty-two thousand volumes in all. Much of the expansion has been brought about by gifts from people who use the library and love it; the Halliwell-Phillips collection of seventeenth-century literature is quite well known. As "Q" said—there are of course hundreds of bigger and finer libraries, but few have a pleasanter tradition and not one is so beautifully placed.

In the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* for March, 1948 (pages 6-37), Leonard S. Wilson writes on "Library filing, classification and cataloguing of maps, with special reference to wartime experience," and in the December, 1947, issue (pages 209-222), Alfred H. Meyer discussed the "Geographic classification of geography material, as based upon the Dewey classification system."

### **Students' Problems**

A. J. WALFORD

Note-taking is a habit about which there must always be a variety of opinions. Some can memorise, aurally and visually, on the spot; they are able to attend lectures and imbibe new ideas or material on a blackboard without bothering to write notes. I envy all such. For the great majority there will certainly be some form of note-taking, in rough. This is greatly enhanced, so far as both memorising and future reference goes, by a careful transference to some more permanent form not too many hours later. Note-making from text-books is but a further stage on the same road, for few of us are, like Dr. Johnson, able to devour the contents of a book for future reference at a single reading.

Systematisation, whatever the form of registering ideas received, is clearly the main objective, for both an overall picture of a subject and for detail. For the former the tabular and diagrammatic forms have visual advantages. Draw up, for example, a diagram of the leading encyclopaedic works, text-books, bibliographies (both retrospective and current) and periodicals on each of the Dewey main classes and you will probably find that the filled in "boxes" are a stimulus to the memory. The History of English Literature, again, responds to both a chronological table, or "bird's

## THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

eye view," and to the brief dictionary form—the short list of 20 or 30 definitions of literary terms.

But as one approaches one's subject in more detail—and this obviously applies particularly to the Final—note-taking must be "pin-pointed": we find the need to collect useful data on the minutiae and form, as it were, dossiers for future reference. Mr. C. H. Tomalin, of the National Institute for Research in Dairying, has experimented on these lines, and I take this opportunity of quoting his findings in full:—

### NOTE-TAKING FOR EXAMINATIONS

by C. H. TOMALIN.

I suppose that for most people sitting for examinations, note-taking forms an important part of their studies, and it is well to spend some time in devising a method which serves one's needs most efficiently.

About a year ago, I commenced a correspondence course for a section of the Final examination, and one of the first books I read was "Records and research in engineering and industrial science," by Dr. J. E. Holmstrom. (Second edition, Chapman & Hall, 1947). I became particularly interested in the section "Index filing for personal use" (p. 261 *et seq.*)\*, and resolved to keep my notes according to the author's system.

A simplified form of the system as used by the writer will be described.

The principle of the Holmstrom system is that notes are made on cards (the size recommended being 8in. by 5in.), and that actual information from a publication is recorded on the cards, rather than a mere citation of the source of the material. The object is to compile an index which provides information at one's elbow, rather than a list of sources which one must hunt up for the required information.

The space at the top of each card is used for subject-headings. These subject-headings are chosen by oneself, and sub-divided as the index grows. In assigning a subject-heading to a given card, the term chosen is written in the top left-hand corner of the card. If it becomes necessary to sub-divide a heading, the sub-division is written to the right of the original heading. This sub-division may itself be sub-divided if required.

As an example, under the heading *Co-operation* one may have cards bearing the following sub-headings:—

*Co-operation*

*Germany*

*International*

*Loan methods*

*London.*

*Metropolitan special collections*

*Sheffield scheme.*

As the cards accumulate, it will be seen that a simple form of alphabetic-classed index is being built up. After about one hundred cards have been collected, I have found it useful to make a list of the subject-headings and

\*Dr. Holmstrom has amplified this section of his book in "How to take, keep and use notes." (ASLIB Pamphlets, No. 1, 1947).

## THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

sub-divisions on a double-sheet of ruled foolscap. One can then see a good number of headings at a glance and thus form a general idea of the extent of one's reading. The list reveals those subjects on which one has a good deal of material, and it also reveals gaps in one's reading. It may be necessary at this stage to transfer cards from certain synonymous headings to the heading chosen. In such cases, "See" references are incorporated in the subject-heading list; a few "See also" references to related headings may also be useful. When cards bearing new headings are added to the index after the list is compiled, it is, of course, necessary to incorporate these new headings in the list.

I have found this subject-heading list extremely useful for revision purposes. Suppose, for example, it is decided to revise the subject *Germany: Library system*. One refers to the list, and related headings likely to contain useful material are noted. In this instance one would note such headings as

*Berlin. State Library.*

*Co-operation. Germany.*

*Deutsche Bücherei.*

Reference is made to the card index under *Germany: Library system* and the related headings. The cards are then taken out and read. When the cards are replaced in the subject sequence, it is a good plan to place a pencil tick against the headings used on the subject list. In this way, one can be sure of revising every subject on which one has made notes.

I have found this method of note-taking on cards to be superior to the usual method of using an exercise book or loose-leaf file. One of its chief merits is that later information on a particular subject may be added in its correct place on the appropriate card. In using a note-book, one is never quite sure where one's notes on a particular subject are, and probably there will be insufficient space to incorporate new material when they are found.

### **Books for Students**

PLANT, MARJORIE. *The supply of foreign books and periodicals to the libraries of the United Kingdom: report of a survey made under the auspices of the Rockefeller Foundation.* The Library Association, 1949. (2s. 6d.; 2s. to members).

For some time now librarians have been showing increasing interest in the degree of representation of foreign books and periodicals in British libraries. In addition, the Royal Society gave detailed consideration to the question at a 1948 conference, and the University and Research Section of the Library Association have set up a working party to discuss ways and means. What has been lacking is precise information on the present position, and Dr. Plant is to be congratulated on her work in providing many of the answers. Appointed by the University and Research Sections, and aided by the Rockefeller Foundation, Dr. Plant set out to collate details of the experience of librarians, publishers and booksellers in this country and overseas. Her findings include complaints from booksellers concerning difficulties of import regulations, pleas of shortage of funds and "not knowing what to order" from librarians, and some remarkable statistics

## THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

concerning the unequal coverage of foreign publications in British libraries, especially in the fields of government publications and the official and non-official serials of the smaller countries. As one librarian pointed out, part of the reason for lack of representation of minor languages lies in the "reluctance of scientific workers to spend time on tackling papers written in languages other than English and French. I find that only a few are willing to spend time even on German literature." Dr. Plant here emphasises the need for improved abstracting services, stressing the point that foreign material—"be it in German, Russian or even Magyar"—should certainly not be ignored. How true this is can be seen from the fact that the discovery of the existence of the meson was first announced from Osaka University by Professor Yukawa.

Among the book-selection aids mentioned by Dr. Plant a place should certainly be found on page 22 for the excellent American periodical *Books Abroad*, which is especially valuable for its careful reviews of books on the humanities. More attention could also have been paid to the Farmington Plan (page 21) of which too little is known in this country.

Librarians will find of great use the information given in Part II, which surveys country by country the best book selection aids, and lists libraries willing to exchange their accessions bulletins. Appendix C contains a useful address list of the principal foreign publishers.

Assistants studying for the Bibliography and Book Selection Examination should certainly buy a copy of this work for themselves, for there is much information here of direct benefit to them in their studies.

R.L.C.

### Bibliographic Index

Some months ago the Committee of the London Group of the University and Research Section of the Library Association gave some thought to the question as to whether there was not a good deal of bibliographical material being produced in this country, much of it of value, that was not coming to the attention of those to whom it might be of use. Such material was usually not of the type to which reference was made in the usual trade bibliographical publications.

The Committee decided to communicate with the Editor of the "Bibliographic Index" (the H. W. Wilson Company) concerning the more comprehensive inclusion, in that Index, of bibliographies published by various specialised organisations and persons in this country, and a reply was received from the Editor stating that she would welcome full particulars of all such bibliographies for inclusion in the Index.

It is hoped that all librarians and others who might be able to help in this connection will make an effort to send such details to The Editor, "Bibliographic Index," the H. W. Wilson Company, 950-972, University Avenue, New York 52, N.Y.

#### REMINDER

Have you opted for the A.A.L. this year?